

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 6-9 and 13-22 are pending. All claims are under examination.

Support

Support for the amendments to claim 1 can be found in claims 10-12. Since the limitations of claims 10-12 have been introduced into claim 1, claims 10-12 have been cancelled.

Issues Under 35 USC § 102

The rejection in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the last Office Action of selected claims as lacking novelty under 35 USC § 102 over US Patent 5,952,429 (Ikeda) is traversed but has been rendered moot by the present amendments. Neither claim 10, nor claim 11, nor claim 12 was rejected on this ground. Since the limitations of all three of these claims have been introduced into the rejected claims, this ground of rejection has clearly been overcome.

Issues Under 35 USC § 103

The rejection of claims 1-4, 6-11, 13-20 and 22 in paragraphs 3 and 4 of the last Office Action as obvious over US Patent 5,952,048 (Tsubuko) in view of US Patent 4,673,718 (Ryntz) is traversed but has been rendered moot by the present amendment.

Claim 12 was not rejected on this ground. Since the limitations of claim 12 have now been introduced into claim 1, and since all other claims are either directly or indirectly dependent on claim 1, this ground of rejection has clearly been overcome.

The rejection of claim 21 in paragraph 5 of the last Office Action as obvious over Tsubuko in view of Ryntz and further in view of US Patent 5,936,027 (Zahrobsky) is traversed. The limitations of claim 12 have now been introduced into claim 1. Since claim 21 is dependent on claim 1, claim 21 is also free of this ground of rejection.

The rejection in paragraph 6 of claims 10-12 is traversed but has been rendered moot since these claims have been cancelled.

The Takao Declaration

The attention of the Examiner is respectfully invited to the declaration of Mr. Nagayuki Takao, hereinafter referred to as the Takao declaration, filed concurrently herewith under the provisions of 37 CFR § 1.132.

As shown by the Takao declaration, the claimed invention is not obvious in view of Tsubuko or of any of the other cited references, no matter how these cited references are combined.

CONCLUSION

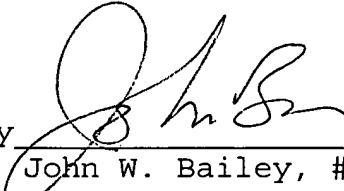
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact David R. Murphy (Reg. No. 22,751) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.


If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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Attachment: 37 CFR § 1.132 Declaration of Mr. Nagayuki Takao